

## SAN DOMINGO.

### REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

#### Special Message of the President.

#### HIS DUTY IN THE MATTER ENDED.

The President, on the 5th instant, forwarded to Congress the report of the San Domingo Commissioners, with the following accompanying message:

To the Senate and House of Representatives: I have the honor to submit herewith to the two Houses of Congress the report of the Commissioners appointed in pursuance of joint resolution approved January 12, 1871.

It will be observed that this report more than sustains all that have heretofore said in regard to the productiveness and healthfulness of the Republic of San Domingo, of the unanimity of the people for annexation to the United States, and of their peaceful character. I have the honor to say to myself, that I should have given all the circumstances which first led to the negotiation of a treaty for the annexation of the Republic of San Domingo to the United States, and which I now hold, I did not deem of instituting any steps for the acquisition of insular possessions. I believed, however, that our institutions were broad enough to extend over the continent as rapidly as other peoples might desire to bring themselves under our protection. I believed, further, that we should not permit any independent government within the limits of North America to pass from a condition of independence to one of ownership or protection under a European power.

Soon after my inauguration as President I was waited upon by an agent of President Baez, who proposed to annex the Republic of San Domingo to the United States. This gentleman represented the capacity of the island, the desire of the people, and their character and habits about as they have been described by the Commissioners. He also represented the resources of the island, and the fact that, being weak in numbers and poor in purse, they were not capable of developing their great resources; that the people had no incentive to improve, on account of the lack of protection for their accumulations, and that if not accepted by the United States, with institutions which they loved above those of any other nation, they would be compelled to seek protection elsewhere. To this statement I gave no reply, and gave no indication of what I thought of the proposition.

In the course of time I was waited upon by a second gentleman from San Domingo, who made the same representations, and who was received in like manner.

View of the facts which had been laid before me, and with an earnest desire to maintain the "Monroe doctrine," I believed that I should be justified in my duty if I reflected on the statement I felt that I turned a deaf ear to the appeal I might in the future be justly charged with a flagrant neglect of the public interests, and an utter disregard of the welfare of a down-trodden people, and that I had failed to use my strong government and for protection in the enjoyment of the fruits of their own industry. Those opponents of annexation who have heretofore professed to be pre-eminently the friends of the rights of the colored people, and my most violent assailants if I reflected on the clear duty. Accordingly, after having appointed a commissioner to visit the island, who declined on account of sickness, I selected a second gentleman, of the capacity, judgment, and integrity I had and have yet the most unbounded confidence. He visited San Domingo, not to secure or hasten annexation, but unprejudiced and unbiased to learn all the facts about the government, the people, and the resources of the Republic.

He went certainly as well prepared to make an unfavorable report as a favorable one, if the facts warranted it. His report fully corroborates the views of previous commissioners, and upon its receipt I felt that I had received a clear duty. Accordingly, after having appointed a commissioner to visit the island, who declined on account of sickness, I selected a second gentleman, of the capacity, judgment, and integrity I had and have yet the most unbounded confidence. He visited San Domingo, not to secure or hasten annexation, but unprejudiced and unbiased to learn all the facts about the government, the people, and the resources of the Republic.

As soon as it became publicly known that such a treaty had been negotiated, the people of the country were occupied with allegations calculated to prejudice the merits of the case, and with aspersions upon those whose duty had connected them with it. Amidst the false excitement created by these reports, to receive the requisite two-thirds vote of the Senate, and was rejected; but whether the action of that body was based wholly upon the merits of the treaty, or might not have been in some degree influenced by the false allegations, could not be known by the people, because the debates of the Senate, in secret session, are not published. Under these circumstances, I deemed it due to the public which I held, and due to the day after tomorrow, who had been charged with the investigation, that such proceedings should be had as would enable the people to know the truth. A commission was, therefore, constituted under a resolution transmitted, and by the President, in order that the people might have the benefit of their views. Students of science and correspondents of the press, with regard to political questions, were invited to the expedition, and their numbers were limited only by the capacity of the vessel.

The mere rejection by the Senate of a treaty negotiated by the President only indicates a difference of opinion between the executive departments of the Government, without touching the character or wounding the pride of either. But when such a rejection takes place simultaneously with charges openly made of corruption on the part of the President, or of those employed by him, the case is different. Indeed, in such case, the honor of the nation demands investigation. This has been accomplished by the report of the Commissioners, and the President has fully vindicated the purity of the motives of the Government, and the integrity of the President, and the honor of the nation.

And now my task is finished, and with it all personal solicitude upon the subject. My duty being done, your indignation, and hand over the whole matter to the judgment of the American people and of their representatives in Congress assembled. The facts will be spread before the country and a decision rendered by that tribunal upon the questions so seldom met, and against whom I have no policy to enforce. My opinion remains unchanged—indeed, it is confirmed by the report of the interests of our country and of San Domingo alike invite the annexation of that Republic.

In view of the difference of opinion upon this subject, I suggest that no action be taken at the present session beyond the printing and general dissemination of the report.

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men are wiser than any one man; and if the people, upon a full presentation of the facts, shall decide that the annexation of the Republic is not desirable, every department of the Government ought to acquiesce in that decision.

In again submitting to Congress a subject upon which public sentiment has been divided, and which has been made occasion of acrimonious debates in Congress, as well as of unjust aspersions elsewhere, I may, I trust, be indulged in a single remark. No man can hope to perform duties so delicate and responsible as pertain to the Presidential office without some incurring the hostility of those who deem their opinions and wishes treated with insufficient consideration; and he who undertakes to conduct the affairs of a great government as a faithful public servant, if sustained by the approval of his own conscience, may rely with confidence upon the candor and intelligence of a free people, whose best interests he has striven to subserve, and can bear with patience the censure of disappointed men.

U. S. GRANT.  
EXECUTIVE MANSION, April 5, 1871.

#### Report of the Commissioners.

The Commissioners begin by referring to the action of Congress in providing for the appointment of a commission to visit and inquire into the condition of the Dominican Republic, allude to their departure on the Tennessee, and give the result of their investigations as follows:

#### POLITICAL STATE AND CONDITION—FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

The present government of the Dominican Republic is in theory a constitutional republic. According to its constitution the government is vested in three branches, the executive, legislative, and judicial. The first consists of a President and Vice President elected by an electoral college for a term of six years, with a difference of three years in the time of their election. Both the President and Vice President are ineligible to the presidency during the following term. The President appoints a Council of State, consisting of a Minister of Public Instruction, of the Interior, Police, Agriculture, of Public Works and Commerce; and of War and Marine. One of these four Ministers the duties of Minister of Foreign Relations devolve at the will of the President.

The legislative branch of the Government consists of a Senate (Senado Consultor) elected by the primary assemblies, and has two members for the city of San Domingo, two for San Pedro, and one for each of the other provinces and districts—nineteen in all. These hold office for six years, and may be re-elected. Each province and district has a Governor, and each parish and military post has a commandant, nominated by the Executive and responsible to him. The towns are governed by ayuntamientos or municipal councils, the members of which are elected by the primary assemblies for three years.

The judiciary consists of a Supreme Court, whose seat is at the capital, with a President, four Ministers, and an Attorney General, who are chosen by the electoral college, and who hold office for six years.

The Commissioners found the Government organized and in complete operation in all its departments, and in the exercise of its legitimate government, with General Buenaventura Baez as the Chief Magistrate, in the full and peaceful possession of all parts of the Republic, except on the Haytian border, which is divided by the line of demarcation, and is divided by Haytians, and political intrigues and emissaries who have congregated at various points in the neighboring islands. These are not extraordinary activity at this time by the Government, and the strong attachment of many of the leading men, who hold him as the only statesman among them who can hold the nation against domestic factions and foreign foes.

The frequency of civil commotions during a long period, and the consequent insecurity of property, have paralyzed industry, discouraged accumulation, and so impoverished the country that for the last two years the financial resources of the Government, as its officers informed us, have been made to pay its expenses. Meanwhile it has been constantly harassed with incursions and attempts at revolution. Only the ability of the administration, and the loyalty of the population, and the maintenance of its existence through so many difficulties.

#### EXISTING INSURRECTIONS.

The insurrections which still exist are headed by Cabral and Luperon. The former of these is universally conceded to be the more important, but he is not a general, but a regular organized army; neither is his expedition of a clearly defined policy. Both seem animated by interests, attachments, and resentments purely personal. That General Cabral does not claim to be the legitimate head of the Republic; that he does not claim to represent the principle of constitutional or legal authority and order, is shown by the fact that, in his proclamation, and in a communication to the "Comité Central," he claims to be the "Chief of the Revolution," and the journal pretending to emanate from him at San Juan, but well understood to be printed at the Haytian capital, is styled "Bulletin of the Revolution."

The disturbance of which Cabral is the head has its seat in the western part of the Republic, and due to the day after tomorrow, who had been charged with the investigation, that such proceedings should be had as would enable the people to know the truth. A commission was, therefore, constituted under a resolution transmitted, and by the President, in order that the people might have the benefit of their views. Students of science and correspondents of the press, with regard to political questions, were invited to the expedition, and their numbers were limited only by the capacity of the vessel.

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Before the next session of Congress the people will have considered the subject and formed an intelligent opinion concerning it, to which opinion, deliberately made, and to which duty of every department of the Government to give heed, and no one will more cheerfully conform to it than myself. It is not only the theory of our Constitution that the will of the people is constitutionally preserved, but the supreme law, but I have ever believed that "all

the local and municipal liberties of provinces, districts, and towns have suffered greatly. It appears to the Commissioners that under a government guaranteeing liberty and order, these municipal bodies, situated throughout the country, might become centers of a better system than the Dominican Republic has yet known.

#### DESIRE FOR ANNEXATION.

To the surprise of the Commission, in almost all parts of the country, even the remotest, the people were found to be familiar with the question of annexation to the United States, and to have discussed it among themselves with intelligence.

All classes in all parts of the Republic were consulted—magistrates and ecclesiastics of every grade; officials, civil and military; citizens of all professions and occupations, in town and country—and everywhere there was a general agreement in the declaration that their only hope of permanent peace and prosperity is in annexation to and becoming part of the people of the United States.

#### AMERICAN COLONISTS.

Their love of the country of their birth seems to have deepened with time, and they all look upon American institutions as the only means of rescuing the country from its present insecurity. Very touching expressions of this met the Commissioners at various points.

#### THE POPULAR DISPOSITION.

When asked if they would prefer to remain an independent nation, the people generally answered that they would be glad to preserve their independence if it were possible, but since experience had shown that the nation could not sustain itself, they were compelled to look abroad for support, and if they must prefer their nationality, they preferred the American Union, with free institutions, a friendly people, and common interests.

They seem to us to be more nearly unanimous in their views than we have ever before known a people to be upon any political question. It was only by diligent search that the exceedingly small number of persons who opposed annexation could be found at all. The principal part of the opposition, which does exist, appears to be among certain traders in the ports, some of whom, in case of annexation and competition with American enterprise, would lose control of branches of business, which in the present narrow channels they have a monopoly; others are agents of houses abroad, and in the event of these branch establishments being withdrawn, would be supplanted.

Soon after the treaty of annexation was negotiated a popular vote was taken in the manner usual in that Republic, as required by the treaty, which resulted in an almost unanimous expression in favor of annexation to the United States. The great mass of the population before the Commission goes to show that this was a truthful expression of the will of the people; and in all the expeditions, either of members of their own body or their agents, ample corroboration of this opinion met them at every point.

#### CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

The physical, mental, and moral condition of the inhabitants of Santo Domingo was found to be much more advanced than had been anticipated. The population is generally of mixed race, the great majority, especially along the coast, are neither pure white nor pure black; they are mixed in every conceivable degree. In some parts of the interior considerable numbers of the pure white race are to be found, and in the mixed race the white blood predominates. The people differ widely in this particular from the Haytians, among whom the black race is in complete ascendancy. The cultivated and educated class, the President, members of his Cabinet, Senators, judges, and local magistrates, compare well with the same class in other countries; and the uneducated appear equal to the same class in any other country with which we have had acquaintance. They are practically destitute of prejudice of class, race, or color. In their intercourse with each other and with strangers they are courteous in manner, respectful, and polite. In all their relations with them the Commissioners found them kind and hospitable. The testimony shows them to be an honest and industrious people, among whom, in the rural districts, a person may travel alone and unarmed all over the country, with perfect security. The judicial officers stated that high crimes, such as murder, arson, burglary, and the like, are nearly unknown among them. No paper class exists, and beggary is almost unknown. They are a healthy, energetic, and brave people, and are rarely seen in any of the low vices that are so common in the Haytians. In their intercourse with each other and with strangers they are courteous in manner, respectful, and polite. In all their relations with them the Commissioners found them kind and hospitable. 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